



Trucker Reality

By OOFI • Sep 18, 2023

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Welcome to Trucker Reality: Academia, lawmakers, and regulators often look at the trucking industry from the 30,000-foot level.

- However, the OOIDA Foundation (OOFI) believes it's important to examine trucking from the driver's seat by looking through the windshield, six feet up from the pavement.

Congressional meeting on autonomous trucks during Truck Driver Appreciation Week seems ill-advised



The big picture: Chris Spear of ATA stated in a congressional hearing last week concerning fully autonomous trucks that removing drivers will bring more drivers into the industry.

- So let me get this straight. If you have one driver in a truck and you take that driver out of the truck how many drivers do you have left?
- I must have missed that day in math. Removing drivers will bring more drivers?

I am confused: Mr. Spear contended that [job] displacement is a myth.

What they're saying: Mr. Spear, in supporting autonomous trucking, believes that innovation has a role to play, and developing driver assist technologies into fully autonomous vehicles—is something we don't view that as a threat.

- Maybe Spear doesn't view AVs as a threat because he isn't a driver.
- He quotes from a recent DOT report that claims that in macroeconomics the loss of drivers will not have a huge impact on the economy.
- That same study goes on to state that long-haul drivers will be the most affected, I guess a few thousand drivers being impacted is of no great macroeconomic loss, but to the driver and family who loses their job, it can be devastating.

Stacked deck: The hearing, which took place during driver appreciation week, included two speakers from the autonomous truck development, one from a safety advocate group, and Mr. Spear.

- Sadly lacking were any real truckers.

True to form, Mr. Spear cited the often debunked shortage of drivers as the reason for a need for autonomous trucks.

- This is more fuzzy math as FMCSA shows there are 400,000+ new CDLs issued on average every year.

Even more confused: If you endorse autonomous trucks to help solve the shortage of drivers, as well as propose that 18 to 21 year-olds be allowed to drive interstate for the same reason, then what will the industry do with all these new young drivers who committed themselves to driving a truck for their career, only to be replaced by an autonomous truck shortly thereafter?

- **I forgot,** in the macroeconomic paradigm they are of little importance.

The bottom line: Truck drivers are the heart and soul of macro-micro-and all economics.

Cyber attack on ELDs continue unabated.



Big Thing: There is a nearly constant barrage of warnings about cybersecurity issues in all activities.

Warned: We are not to respond to emails or texts. Pretty much don't click on much of anything for fear of having your identity stolen.

When the autonomous trucking industry representatives were asked during the recent hearing in D.C. on autonomous trucks (During driver appreciation week) about the danger of their systems being hacked, they really didn't answer the question.

- DOT can't answer the question either, as their various departments have been hacked. The reality is they cannot stop hacking or hackers.

When autonomous vehicles first started to emerge on the scene a few years ago, a small core of college students demonstrated that they could take over a vehicle on the road by using equipment easily purchased off the self.

Orbcomm, a fleet management provider, was hacked, not through the engine, but through the ELD.

- True cybersecurity is pretty much non-existent regardless of what those selling their product would have you believe.

This time of year, as we somberly remember the terrorist attack on the twin towers, I remember truckers being warned that large trucks could be used as a bomb by terrorists all over the world.

- The OOIDA Foundation was also warned, as such we took courses, and even created educational materials in what to look for to safeguard our infrastructure and people.

Question: Are we safer today? As vehicles become more autonomous they also become more vulnerable to hackers. Mandatory ELDs opened up a whole new avenue for hackers. There was no pressure to make the ELDs cybersecure as ELDs were self-certified by the manufacturer.

- Defense against these hackers has not kept up with the pace of change, and those who oppose such quick changes are seen as holding back the U.S. and its "race with China".
- The ability to hack into any vehicle from any distance is a serious issue.
- Autonomous vehicle makers cannot continue to gloss over these problems. They must address them.

Personal anecdote: I ran a fleet of hazardous material trucks in 1995, one of which was headed to Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 when the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was blown up by a crudely developed bomb planted inside a truck.

- Fortunately my truck was able to turn around and come back safely, but I have visited the Memorial several times as I have family there.

The bottom line: We don't need to be in a race with a country that has little concern for safety and human rights.

- As we move to more and more autonomous transportation let's move slow and steady. The turtle did win the race with the hare.

As forces continue to push toward autonomous trucks and electrification, it's imperative that owner-operators and drivers express their concerns.

ATRI's Top Industry Issues Survey is a good place to do so.

- The OOIDA Foundation has cooperated with ATRI on this survey for several years in order to give owner-operators the opportunity to express their thoughts. Go to:

<https://www.research.net/r/2023-Top-Industry-Issues>

As part of the Foundation's education mandate, we would also like to inform you of a webinar put on by the Colorado DOT in partnership with the Colorado SP.

- The webinar is a comprehensive, strategic, and safety-focused effort to inform and educate in-state and inter-state trucking companies and drivers on the challenges of driving in Colorado's mountains.
- It includes information on preventing and avoiding hazards, resources to consider, and a consistent reminder to drive slowly and steadily to be safe for the long haul.

Registration Link: It is being recorded and will be available later.

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